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ABSTRACT

Although the support network of elderly individuals has received increased attention recently, most research has focused on the parent child relationship without examining other levels of kin interrelations. To examine the help received by rural-transitional older adults from their consanguineous kin (adult children, grandchildren, siblings, nieces, nephews, cousins) and from their affinal kin (spouses of consanguineous kin) in order to determine correlates of help received according to kin type, and to examine expectations for help, 321 older adults were surveyed. The subjects were working class, rural-transitional North Carolina residents, aged 65 to 96 years, 65 percent female. The 141-item questionnaire gathered information about demographics, income, health, morale, interaction patterns, expectations for help, and feelings of closeness. An analysis of the results showed that correlates of help at each kin level were similar and included degree of blood relatedness, proximity to kin, the need of the recipient as related to health, and the number and age of children. The female child or child-in-law, who was past the childbearing stage and who lived in close proximity to the older parent was most helpful to that parent. Kin beyond the child, child-in-law levels were of little functional importance in the helping network of older adults. Although these "other kin" appeared to be of little instrumental value in assistance and feelings of closeness, they played an important psychological role in the lives of these older adults. The results support the kin-selection theory in that helping behaviors were based on degree of consanguinity and associated marriage tie, and the extent of the older adult's dependency based on health. (Author/BL)

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AFFINAL AND CONSANGUINEAL KIN AS A SOCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE RURAL ELDERLY

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to examine the help received by older rural-transitional adults from seven levels of consanguineous and affinal kin and to determine the correlates of help received according to kin type. Attention was also given to older adults' expectations for help according to level of kin and to their feelings of closeness to kin. The sample consisted of 321 working class adults, aged 65 to 96 years, selected by a compact cluster sampling procedure. The data showed that kin beyond the child, child-in-law levels were of little functional importance in the helping network of older adults. Their roles also appeared to be relatively undefined. Primary correlates of help at each kin level were similar and these included: proximity to kin, health of the older person, and number of children. Results of the study support the "kin-selection" theory in that helping behaviors were based upon degree of consanguinity (and associated marriage tie) and extent of dependency of older adults as seen through health.

Key Words: Consanguinity, Kin, Older Adults, Family Network, Helping, Rural Elderly, Affinal Kin

The family as a major factor in the support network of the elderly has received increased attention within recent years (Lee, 1980; Streib & Beck, 1981; Troll, 1971). Most of this research has focused, in the main, on the parent-adult child relationship and seldom examined those patterns of interrelations that extend to other levels of kin. Because of the characteristic nature of American kin structure, information on helping patterns according to consanguineous and affinal level is useful in determining the potential of "other kin" in the support network of the elderly.

The American kinship system generally can be characterized by three qualities; the extent to which it is bilateral, it is based upon blood relatedness, and females predominate in kin relations (Adams, 1968). Three interrelated conceptual levels of familism can be observed to be operant within the system each with special implications for the elderly. These include: the social organization of the family, family behavior, and the feelings of obligation or expectations held by kin (Heller & Quesada, 1977). Social organization refers to the role rights and obligations linking family members together. Implicit here is who constitutes kin and the norms associated with these kin roles. Behavior refers to the fulfillment of role obligations, i.e., the observed behaviors between levels of kin based upon normative levels of expectation held by family, friends, and society in general. The third conceptual level of familism, perceptions of obligations, deals with the amount of responsibility toward kin that the family member

holds. These expectations are dependent upon level or "closeness" of kin and norms for the fulfillment of that role. Other social factors may also be found to influence role obligations and performance such as sex, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (Lee, 1980). Social variables would not always appear, however, to account for family variations. Oliveri and Reiss (1981), for example, pointed out that differences in families, in part, are attributable to crucial aspects of their own history and development as intimate groups and not simply to characteristics of the social world in which they live.

Studies on the American kinship system support the "kin-selection theory" or "inclusive fitness" theory as described by Van der Berghe (1977). This theory posits that helping behaviors are based upon the degree of kin . More specifically, the probability of altruistic acts is a function of two factors: the degree of relatedness between altruist and beneficiary and the benefit-cost ratio of the altruistic act to recipient and altruist, ie., helping behaviors are more likely to occur among closest kin and when need is greatest. The structural- functionalist approach in anthropological studies of the family also strongly supports the "kin selection" theory of family interaction (Verdon, 1981). This approach is based upon the premise that family members bind together in order to regulate behavior through a system of norms, values, rights, duties, and beliefs based in the main on consanguinity, or blood relationship.

Just who constitutes "close" kin may be seen to vary according to a number of factors. Heller and Quesada (1977) observed at least two orientations of families to "closest kin" in rural America. They found an "extended- kin" oriented familism in a section of the rural South. Notions of

close kin extended in many cases as far as first cousins. Characterizing this orientation were large numbers of kin residing in relatively close proximity with strong attachments to secondary kin. In contrast, he found what was labeled as "western type" familism in the western region in which interaction was based in the main on the nuclear family with limited extended kin relationships. These and other data raise questions regarding the implications of variations in the membership of kin supports of the elderly. For example, to what extent do various levels of consanguineous kin figure into the helping network of older adults? And, of what relative importance is the role of affinal kin in helping behaviors? The purpose of the present study was to examine the help received by older rural-transitional adults from seven levels of kin with respect to kin type (both within and between levels of consanguineous and affinal kin) and to determine the correlates of help received according to kin type. Attention was also given to older adults' expectations of help according to level of kin.

KIN TYPES

Consanguineous Kin

Consanguineous kin of older adults represent, in the main, adult children and their children, siblings and their children, and cousins. The common denominator is at least one blood tie to the older adult. Role obligations are usually found to weaken as the relationship moves away from that of the parent-child dyad and as the degree of kin diminishes. The importance of the "closeness" dimension of the kin relationship was shown by Adams (1968). He

found barriers to relationships such as geographical proximity to have less impact on total contact of kin, exchange of aid, as well as emotional ties among consanguineous kin than among non-consanguineous kin. Relations between consanguineous kin of equal blood ties also have been found to vary. Yanagisako (1977) found sex to be an important factor in the associational and helping patterns between generations of Japanese-American families. Females (daughters) were more likely to figure into the support networks of older parents than sons. This finding substantiated a general finding in the literature of female centrality in the American kinship system (referred to earlier in descriptions by Adams, 1968).

Data generally concur that the most important relationship between consanguineous kin is that between parents and children (Streib & Beck, 1981; Troll, 1971). Approximately 80% of older Americans have one or more children and at least 70% receive help in some form from them (Kivett & Atkinson, 1983; Shanas, Townsend, Wedderburn, Friis, Milhoj, & Stehouwer, 1968). A number of factors have been found to influence the helping behaviors between adult children and older parents. Other than sex, these also include: residential proximity (Adams, 1968; Lee, 1980; Bengtson, Haddad, & Olander, 1976), dependency needs of the parent (Bengtson et al.,1976), socioeconomic status (Lee, 1980; Shanas et al., 1968), and filial expectations of the parent (Bengtson et al.,1976). Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of the parent-child tie has been the extent to which the older parent can depend upon the support of the child over time, ie., the long term assistance, versus short term crisis support from others.

Little information has been available on the saliency of the sibling role in later adulthood. There is some evidence that the role may reach considerable importance for some groups of the old. Cummings and Schneider (1966) found the sibling tie to be among the most significant kin ties among a group of metropolitan adults aged 50 to 80 years. This bond, however, was second to the parent-child relationship. Cummings and Schneider pointed out the stability of the sibling tie and observed it to be stronger than nuclear solidarity. The strength of the sibling relationship in later life would appear to be related to the sex of siblings (Adams, 1968; Shanas et al., 1968), marital status (Shanas et al., 1968), ethnic background (Johnson, 1982), social class (Adams, 1968), and age (Cummings & Schneider, 1966). In general, studies on the sibling tie in later life show relationships to be stronger among females (sister-sister ties); when the older adult has never married, is widowed, or childless; among higher socioeconomic groups and individuals with higher incomes; and among older adults. Cantor (1979), in observing the family interaction patterns according to ethnicity in an urban area, found that the relationship between income and sibling interaction was mainly a factor of economics when siblings were mobile, i.e., siblings were more likely to continue functional interaction when their income was such that they could remain in contact through visiting, telephoning, and other forms of communication. Adams (1968) found geographical proximity to be a crucial factor in the relations between siblings.

Other research indicates a relative weakness in the sibling relationship in later life. Lopata (1979), in her classic study of metropolitan widows, reported the findings relative to sibling relationships to be among her most

unexpected findings. She found siblings to be of little economic, social, or emoticnal support in the support system of 300 widows 50 years or older living in the Chicago area. Lopata observed that 54% of the sample never mentioned siblings in their reports of kin interactions. Widows reported neither brothers nor sisters as being very helpful to them during the time they were creating new lives for themselves. In addition, siblings were seldom reported as confidants. Similarly, Cantor (1979) in observing an inter city ethnic group of the elderly found little evidence of most respondents having a "functional sibling". Cantor's finding was related in part to the fact that despite the observation that two-thirds of the elderly had a sibling, only one- third of them had a brother or a sister living close by.

Although approximately 90% of older adults have at least one grandchild (Butler & Lewis, 1982), little information has been available on the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren. Wood and Robertson (1976) found an important positive relationship between number of shared activities between grandchild and grandparent and the personal significance of grandparenthood. Findings are mixed with regard to the functional importance of grandchildren in the support system of older adults. Roberson (1976) observed that grandparents seldom engaged in social activities with grandchildren. Harris and Associates (1975), however, reported that among grandparents aged 65 and over, 45% had seen a grandchild within the last day or so, and another 28% within the last week. Similarly, Hill (1970) found that approximately 50% of the grandchildren in his three generational sample visited grandparents on at least a monthly basis.

Most evidence indicates that grandchildren play a relatively minor role in the support system of older adults. Albrecht as early as 1954 found that grandchildren do not enter into strong patterns of helping in terms of services and assistance, unless they are wealthy or intervening generations are unable to give care. Similarly, Kivett (1982) in a study of 99 grandfathers living in rural and urban areas found only moderate to low levels of interaction and low levels of mutual assistance between the respondents and grandchildren. When assistance was received by grandfathers, it was most likely to be in a few limited areas and provided only a few times a year. Grandfathers, however, frequently expected to receive moderate amounts of financial assistance and help when ill from grandchildren, i.e., their level of grand-filial expectations was relatively high. Three variables were important to the amount of help that grandfathers received from grandchildren. They were in the order of their importance: age of grandchild, proximity of residence, and health of the grandfather. Assistance increased with the age of the grandchild, geographical nearness to a grandchild, and with the poor health of the grandfather. A major conclusion of the study was that there appeared to be a minimum of affectional solidarity between older working class grandfathers and grandchildren as viewed through grandfathers' reports of mutual helping behaviors with grandchildren.

Studies on relationships between older adults and nieces and nephews as well as cousins are relatively scarce. The strength of the relationships that are found is more than likely related to the strength of the relationship with the linking generation, i.e the relationship with either the aunt or uncle or the brother or sister linking the older adults with the kinsman. General

observations have been made regarding the importance of secondary kin. These observations were well summed by Adams (1968) whose study on kin networks of the middle generation showed kin outside of the family of orientation to be relatively unimportant. Adams found that relationships between cousins to be influenced both by the sex of the individuals concerned, the sex of the parents, the proximity between cousins, and the critical stage of life when there was close contact between cousins. The findings showed that cousin relations were more likely to be stronger when cousins were of the same sex, when they were related through the mother's side of the family, where geographical proximity was not great, and when the individuals had lived in close proximity and close contact during childhood.

Strong relationships with kin beyond the sibling level would appear to be based upon the availability of more primary kin. Shanas et al. (1968) observed that nieces and nephews and distant kin became more salient in the kin network of older adults when they were childless or without siblings. Lopata (1979) cast more importance on the niece-nephew relationship than is generally shown. She observed that nieces and nephews had a more important crisis function than grandchildren in the support network of her respondents. She found, however, that grandchildren had a greater "comfort" function than nieces and nephews. Lopata , despite the observation of some saliency of the niece-nephew role, concluded that society in general has overestimated the importance of the children of siblings (as well as grandchildren) in the lives of widows.

Affinal Kin

Affinal kin, while usually not representing a blood tie, are by nature of their relationship to consanguineous kin sometimes classified as consanguineous (Shanas et al., 1968). Affinal kin in the main includes the spouses of children, grandchildren, siblings, nieces and nephews, and cousins. Limited research suggests that the functional importance of affinal kin is related to the level of consanguineous kin associated with the role. Learner and Kivett (1980), for example, found among a group of rural and urban older adults that children-in-law were more salient in the kin network of the respondents than siblings and siblings-in-law. This stands to reason since the spouse of a child is more than likely to participate simultaneously in activities involving the parent of their spouse. Since most interaction is seen to occur at the parent-child level, the child-in-law would be found to rank higher than other kin on interaction. As with certain consanguineous kin, the number of surviving affinal relatives may be seen to decrease with increases in the age of older adults. This is usually most evident among the very old with respect to generational kin, i.e., brothers and sisters, brothers and sisters-in-law, and cousins. The present study investigated the little understood patterns of relationships between older adults and their consanguineous and affinal kin with respect to amount of help received and expectations for assistance. Special emphasis was placed on help given by "other kin" versus primary kin or children.

METHODS

Sample

This study is a secondary analysis of a data base of 321 adults aged 65 years or older living in a rural-transitional area in the Piedmont area of North Carolina. The respondents represented, in the main, working class backgrounds. Compact cluster procedures were used to determine the enumeration districts from which the final area segments were randomly selected and canvassed. All persons aged 65 years or older living within a selected area were interviewed.

Measures

The survey instrument was a 141-item questionnaire administered verbally by trained interviewers. Each interview took approximately two hours to complete. Information included: demographic characteristics; income; health; morale; and interaction patterns with children, grandchildren, siblings, nieces and nephews, cousins, and in-laws associated with each level of consanguineous kin. Questions were asked about the kinsman with whom there was the most contact within each level of kin.

The two variables of primary interest of the study were help received and familial expectations or the amount of assistance that the older person expected the kin in focus to supply in the event of a financial or health

crisis. Help received was measured through reponses to the question,"I'm going to mention some ways in which families sometimes help each other. Tell me how many times in the past year that each of your relatives has helped you with these." Nine types of assistance were read to the respondent who was asked in return to answer in regard to each person (child, cousin, etc.) who had been discussed earlier. Areas of assistance included: transportation, minor household repairs, housekeeping, shopping, yard-work, car care, illness, decisions, and " other". Responses for each item were coded according to the frequency of help received from each relative during the past year :(1) never, (2) less than once a year, (3) once a year (4) several times a year, (5) once a month, (6) several times a month, (7) once a week, (8) several times a week, and (9) daily. Cronbach's alpha for reliability for the help scales were: child, r=.84; child-in-law, r=.78; grandchild, r=.73; sibling, r=.85; sibling-in-law, r=.69; niece-nephew, r=.73; and cousin, r=.63.

Familial expectations were measured through responses to two hypothetical situations of older persons who needed financial help and aid during illness. The respondents were asked to indicate the degree of responsibility that they felt each level of kin should assume in helping an older relative under the circumstances. Scores were summed over the two scales and possible ranges were from two to six.

Another item, feelings of closeness, was included in the analysis to determine, descriptively, the level of affect felt toward each level of kin of most contact. Respondents were asked, "How close would you say that you feel to (kin of most contact)? "Responses included: "Very close, Pretty close, A little close, Not too close, and Not close."

Other than general descriptive variables, two other variables should be described. These include health of the older respondent and proximity to the kin of most contact. Health was a self-rated variable measured by the Cantril ladder technique (Cantril, 1965). This is a self-anchored nine-point scale on which the respondent is shown a picture of a ladder containing ten rungs. The subject is asked to suppose that the top of the ladder represents the best possible health and the bottom rung the poorest possible health. He or she is then asked to indicate on the ladder where their health is at the present time. Proximity of residence was measured by asking the respondent, "How long does it take (kin of most contact) to get from his/her residence to yours? (1) same household, (2) 10 minutes or less, (3) 11-30 minutes, (4) over 60 minutes, (5) one day or more.

Data Analysis

Three major research questions formed the basis of the present analysis: "Do expectations for assistance from family members vary according to level and type of kin?" "Does assistance from family members in later life vary according to level of kin?", and "What are the factors influencing the amount of assistance received from various levels of kin after age 65?"

Descriptive statistics such as percents, means, standard deviations, and ranges were used for general demographic information on the sample and their kin. T-tests were used to determine differences in familial expectations held by the older adults and the differences in amount of help received between kin groups. Because of the possibility of experiment-wise error through the use

of multiple comparisons, the alpha level for evaluation of t values was set at $p<.001$. Pearson product moment correlations were used to determine the correlates of helping for each of the seven kin groups.

Results

Descriptive Results

Results from the descriptive data showed that 65% of the sample was female and 36% male. The majority of the group was white,(91%) with the remaining number black (8%). Married adults, 57%, comprised the bulk of the sample, while 35% were widowed, 4% were divorced or separated, and 3%, had never married. The respondents had a mean age of 74.2 years and an average educational level of 9.6 years. Approximately 58% of them were from an urban area and 42% from a rural area.

Table 1 provides information on several variables of general information on the seven levels of kinsmen of most contact. The data show that the respondents had a mean of 2.7 children and that the child of most contact was as likely to be a son as a daughter (49% vs. 51%, respectively). The average age of children of most contact was 45 years. The majority of parents, 52%, lived within 30 minutes distance of a referent child. Parents infrequently lived with a child. Frequencies of helping showed that 62% of the parents had received help from children in at least one area during the past year. This assistance was usually with transportation and was received several times during the year. Approximately one-half of the respondents had been helped by

a child when ill.

Older adults had a mean of approximately three children-in-law. The mean age of the child-in-law of most contact was also approximately 45 years which fitted in with the observation that the majority of the children-in-law, 72%, were married to the child of most contact and were about as likely to be sons-in-law as daughters-in-law. More than one-half lived within 30 minutes distance from the respondents. Children-in-law were more likely to have helped respondents with transportation during the year than in other areas as reported by 49% of older adults. Thirty-eight percent had been helped when ill.

Older adults reported a mean of 6 grandchildren. As seen in Table 1, the grandchild of most contact was as likely to be a granddaughter as a grandson. The average age of the grandchild of most contact was approximately 20 years. Referent grandchildren usually lived within 10 minutes of grandparents, 43%, and were most frequently children of adult children of most contact, 68%. Grandchildren were most likely to have helped older adults with transportation as reported by 22% and 21%, respectively.

Older adults had an average of three siblings, approximately 60% of whom lived within thirty minutes distance. Respondents were slightly more likely to mention a sister as a sibling of most contact than a brother, 53% vs. 47%. Siblings of most contact were somewhat younger than the mean age of the respondents, 70 years. Information showed that the sibling of most contact was not necessarily the sibling of closest age to the respondent (47% were the sibling of nearest age; 47% were not; and 6% were only siblings). Other

information showed that 88% of the respondents reported that the sibling of most contact was the sibling who lived in closest geographical proximity. The sibling of most contact was also more likely to be of the opposite sex as seen from the 44% who formed a brother-sister dyad, the 36% who formed a sister-sister dyad, and the 20% who formed a male dyad. Siblings were more likely to have been a source of transportation than for other assistance as reported by 24% of adults who said that siblings had assisted them in this way several times during the past year.

Older adults reported a mean of approximately 3 siblings-in-law. Spouses of siblings were usually female and on an average of five years younger than the respondents. The majority of sibling-in-laws of most contact lived within 30 minutes of older adults. Eighteen percent of the subjects reported receiving assistance in at least one area during the past year from the spouses of their siblings. Assistance was usually with transportation. Other assistance was minimal.

In Table 1 it can be seen that older adults had an average of 11 nieces and nephews. Respondents were slightly more likely to report a niece as a frequent contact than a nephew. The average age of a referent niece or nephew was 44 years which approximated the mean age of the respondents' children of most contact. More than one-half of the referent nieces and nephews, 53%, lived within thirty minutes distance of the older adults. Other data showed the nieces and nephews of most contact to be characteristically of blood kin (consanguineous) to the respondents: 78% were "blood" kin; 13% were related through marriage to their kin; 5% were related through "blood" kin to a spouse; and 4% were related through marriage to a spouse's kin. Nieces and

nephews were more likely to have provided transportation during the past year than other services as reported by 15% of the respondents. Other help was minimal.

Respondents reported a mean of 15 cousins. Cousins of most contact were more likely to be female than male (Table 1). They were also slightly younger than the respondents, 67 years vs. 75 years. Approximately one-half of the referent cousins lived within 30 minutes of the respondents. Other data showed that the cousin of most contact was usually a first cousin, 96%, rather than a more distant cousin and a maternal blood relative, 55%. Approximately 36% of the referent cousins were paternally related through blood, 6% were maternally related through marriage, and 2% were related through marriage on the father's side. Respondents, 42%, usually reported that they knew the cousin of most contact when they were "growing up". Approximately 26% indicated that they had known them most of their lives, 10% said they had lived within 50 miles of the cousin, 8% reported that they only had been around the cousin briefly when an adult or during summers during childhood, and 14% indicated that they had never lived around their referent cousin. Approximately 8% of the respondents reported receiving help in at least one area from the cousin of most contact. Help received was usually transportation with little or no assistance provided in other areas.

Descriptive results of the question dealing with feelings of closeness to the relative of most contact were also examined. The majority of the respondents replied that they felt very close to each of the referent kin. Percentages differed considerably, however, as the kin moved beyond the sibling relationship. For example, whereas eighty percent or more of older

adults reported feeling "very" close to children, children-in-law, and siblings of most contact, a smaller percentage, 69% or less, reported very close feelings toward siblings-in-law, nieces and nephews, and cousins.

[Place Table 1 about here]

Inferential Results

Expectations for help. The results of multiple t-tests, Table 2, show that the amount of assistance that older adults expected to receive from kin differed significantly between most levels. That is to say, with the exception of grandchildren, the amount of assistance that respondents expected to receive from relatives differed significantly from one level of kin to another and in the direction of primary (children) to other kin. Associated affinal kin fell into the hierarchy accordingly.

Help received. Amount of help received from kin of most contact was also analyzed according to kin level to determine if amounts differed (Table 3). A similar hierarchical order was found as with the expectations variable. Difference means were positive in all cases except for nieces and nephews and siblings-in-law. These data show that with the exception of these comparisons, significant differences were found and in the order of more help according to level of consanguineous kin and associated levels of affinal kin.

[Place Tables 2 and 3 about here]

Correlates of help were analyzed according to subject and relative characteristics within kin types (Table 4). Health of older adults, number of children, and proximity of residence were the factors most consistently related to the amount of help received across levels of kin. Help received increased with poor health of the respondents across all levels of kin except cousins. Similarly, the amount of help received was seen to increase across all groups (except cousins and grandchildren) as the number of children of older adults decreased. With regard to relative characteristics, geographical proximity was the variable most consistently related to the amount of help received. These data in combination with the data on the respondents indicated that help received across kin was mainly a function of the health of the older adult, number of children, and the proximity of their relatives of most contact. The educational level of the older adults was unimportant to helping except in the case of grandchildren who were more likely to come to their assistance if they (the grandparents) had low educational levels.

The age of older adults served as a stimulus for assistance among children and children-in-law and nieces and nephews. Age was unimportant to other kin's assistance. Similarly, the age and sex of kin were infrequently related to the amount of assistance that they gave the older adult. Children were more likely to give assistance if they were female, and as it might follow, siblings-in-law were more likely to assist if they were males. Age was important only to children-in-law who were seen to give more assistance as their own age increased.

[Place Table 4 about here]

DISCUSSION

Consanguinity as a Factor in Helping.

Data from this study support in part the "kin-selection" theory that helping behaviors in later life are a function of degree of blood relatedness. Similarly, they support the "benefit-cost" ratio concept included in the theory. That is, altruism is more likely to occur as the recipient is in greater need or is more likely to profit from an altruistic act. These observations were seen in the frequency of assistance provided according to kin order and the frequency with which the dependency needs of older adults (health) were factors in the amount of help received. Assistance received was based on the level of blood tie and the associated tie through marriage. If, as proported by Keesing (1975), affinal kin at the child-in-law and sibling-in-law levels may be classified as consanguinous, as the results of the present study suggest in terms of helping behavior, kin assistance can be considered a function of categorical level of kin rather than strength of the blood tie, per se (i.e., consanguineous vs. affinal relationships). The data indicated, however, that relatively little assistance is provided older adults beyond the child, child- in-law level, conceding the fact that in most cases even this was modest. Streib and Beck (1981) reported the parent-child tie to be the most important among consanguineous kin. Lopata, in her study of widows, found little evidence of kin other than children in the support system

of older women. Comprehensive reviews of the literature also support this observation (Lee, 1980; Troll, 1971).

The finding that children-in-law were second in importance in the helping network of older adults is reinforced by Lopata (1979). She found the spouses of adult children to be of next importance to children in the helping network of older women. The relative importance of children-in-law was probably related to the fact that the majority of them were married to the children of most contact. In turn, spouses were usually a counterpart in filial acts.

Data from the present study show the majority of older adults to have children and, furthermore, most to have one child living within thirty minutes of their residence. These findings support earlier observations by Shanas and Associates (1968) regarding the supply and proximity of adult children in American society. Children of most contact (in the present study) were generally in early middle age, an observation of probable consequence in their helping patterns. That is, the relatively low levels of help received from children could have been related to the fact that many children were highly involved in their careers (most daughters worked al[illegible] many of their children were in the "launching stage", a period frequently characterized by numerous demands upon the middle generation.

Age of child was related to help given to older parents with more assistance given by older children. Lang and Brody (1983) also found age (of daughters) to be a salient index of both increased parent care and shared households. A possible explanation for the age relationship was that older children generally have older parents who in turn have higher dependency

needs. The correlates of kin help suggest that the role rights and obligations of adult children and children-in-law have a clearer definition than for other kin groups. For example, help given was related to the age and sex of adult children and their spouses as well as to the proximity of parents. Correlates of help for other kin groups were less clear cut. The correlates of help given by children support findings by Rosow (1967) that help from children in later life is mainly a function of local residence and health of the parent.

Results from this study show that although children of most contact in later life are as likely to be sons as daughters, a finding probably related to a matter of proximity, daughters provide more help. This finding fits into a general pattern in the intergenerational literature (Lee, 1980; Streib & Beck, 1981; Troll, 1971) of the greater relative importance of females than males in helping in the American kin system. The relationship between number of children and amount of help received by the child of most contact appears to be related to the dependency needs of the parents. Earlier data showed older parents to have more children (Kivett & Atkinson, 1983). As a result, older adults with a number of children might be expected to have more problems associated with age and to have correspondingly greater need for assistance.

In terms of the function of lower levels of kin, siblings and siblings-in-law and grandchildren provide more similar levels of help than other kin . Grandchildren's role in the helping network of older adults would appear to be mainly dependent upon the frequency of contact that their parents have with the older generation as well as the health of grandparents and general proximity to their residence. These data support Rosow's

observations, described earlier, regarding the major factors influencing adult child assistance and also reinforce observations of others regarding the important intermediary role that adult children play in the grardchild-grandparent relationship (Kivett, 1982).

Older adults were slightly more likely to have a sibling than a child. Furthermore, most respondents had at least one sibling living in close proximity. Only one in four adults, however, had received help from the brother or sister of most contact during the past year. As a result, based upon helping behavior, it can be concluded that siblings were of little functional importance in terms of services provided. Their psychological importance, however, may be another matter.

Data from the present study on help received from siblings did not fall into the usual observations of sibling relationships (Adams, 1968). That is, that siblings of most contact are usually siblings of nearest age and are females. The relationships as captured here appeared to be based in the main upon convenience of location to a sibling and the dependency needs of the older adult. The data did agree with earlier observations of Adams (1968) that when distance is ignored, cross sex siblings are about as likely to have interaction as same sex siblings.

Consanguinity appeared to play an important role in the extent to which nieces and nephews figured into the helping network of older adults. The dependency needs of respondents were also important to aid received but they were of less relative importance than to kin of higher levels. In terms of instrumental value to older adults, nieces and nephews were of little relative importance and frequent contact was less likely if they had no blood ties.

This conclusion is essentially the same as that made earlier by Adams (1968) whose research was conducted in the same geographical region.

In the present study, no clear cut pattern was observed regarding the factors contributing to the help supplied by cousins. Although cousins were in more abundance in sheer number than other relatives, contact was infrequent other than with first cousins with blood ties, and with those who were maternally related. Cousins were of quite limited instrumental value to older adults. Cousin relationships, however, appeared to fit patterns of characteristics as described in the paucity of studies on the subject (Adams, 1968). That is, cousins of most contact had usually been associated with older adults during childhood or during earlier life and were usually of maternal descent. Help received from kin beyond the grandchild level appeared to be based in part upon the availability of more primary kin. That is to say, that the fewer the number of children, the more likely these relatives were to provide help to older adults.

Kin Expectations and Feelings of Affect

Older adults held moderately high expectations for assistance from children. Expectations for "other kin" were less and in correspondence to kin level. Moderate expectations were reported for grandchildren and siblings and siblings-in-law while expectations were low for remaining kin. Moderate to low expectations for assistance below the the grandchild, sibling levels were in keeping with the paucity of help received, especially with regard to financial assistance and help in illness.

Family Extendedness and Familism

To the extent that expressed "feelings of closeness" and proximity to kin represent family extendedness, the data support Heller (1979) in observations of "extended-kin" oriented familism in rural southern areas. For although respondents felt "closer" to more primary kin such as children and grandchildren, they expressed relatively high levels of closeness to "other kin". As with Heller and Quesada (1977), data from the present study reflected three inter-related levels of familism operant within the kin help network of older adults. In terms of social organization, the study showed a weakening of helping roles beyond the child-in-law level. Norms associated with helping as viewed through respondent and kin characteristics were relatively undefined for "other kin". Results from the study showed a correspondence between family behavior (as viewed through helping) and expectations held by older adults, i.e., relatively low levels of expectations

for kin beyond the sibling level and correspondingly low levels of assistance from "other kin". The third level of familism observed, perceptions of obligations, was suggested through the actual amount of help received from kin. If a correspondence exists between perceptions of responsibility to kin and helping behavior, as posited by Heller and Quesada (1977), perceptions of obligations held by kin, especially by "other kin", can be described as minimal. Since, according to Heller and Quesada, these expectations are highly dependent upon level of kin and normative expectation of that kin role, (in this case older adults' perceptions of that role) perceptions of obligations of "other kin" may be expectedly low.

In summary, data from the present study show that "other kin", or kin beyond the child level are of little relative functional importance in the helping network of older working class adults. Help received from children, although concededly low, is considerably greater (although similar in type) than that received from "other kin". Level of blood tie and associated marriage tie figure prominently into the factors contributing to the help that older adults receive from kin. Common denominators of helping within most all kin levels are the closeness to which kin live to the older adult, number of children, and health of the older person. Older adults express strong feelings of "closeness" to kin of most contact at all kin levels, but distinctions in level of feeling may be observed beyond the sibling level. These data suggest that although "other kin" appear to be of little instrumental value in terms of assistance and feelings of closeness may be somewhat reduced, "other kin" play an important psychological role in the lives of older persons.

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Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Kin of Most Frequent Contact of Older Rural Transitional Adults

Variable	Kin Group						
	Child	Child In-law	Grand Child	Sibling	Sibling In-law	Niece Nephew	Cousin
Number ($\bar{x}$)	2.7	2.8	6.0	3.1	2.8	11.0	15.3
Sex (%)							
Male	48.7	47.8	48.3	46.9	42.3	38.7	44.8
Female	51.3	52.2	51.7	53.1	57.7	61.3	55.2
Age ($\bar{x}$)	44.5	44.9	19.5	69.5	67.5	43.8	66.6
Proximity (%)							
Same house	5.4	2.2	4.7	2.2	.8	.8	-
10 minutes	36.0	47.0	38.8	29.9	29.2	24.1	22.5
11-30 minutes	16.2	20.6	25.1	29.1	29.9	28.5	31.9
31-60 minutes	10.8	12.6	11.4	14.4	17.8	15.4	21.4
60 minutes-day	21.6	13.7	14.5	18.3	17.4	21.3	17.6
Day+	10.0	4.4	5.5	6.1	7.9	9.9	6.6

Table 2

Difference Means and Levels of Significance of T-Tests for Expectations of Assistance According to Kin Group

Kin Group	(Mean)	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Child	(4.42)						
2. Child-in-law	(3.93)	* .50					
3. Grandchild	(3.71)	* .71	*.22				
4. Sibling	(3.59)	* .83	*.34	.12			
5. Sibling-in-law	(3.12)	*1.30	*.81	* 60	*.47		
6. Niece-Nephew	(2.81)	*1.62	*1.12	*.31	*.78	*.31	
7. Cousin	(2.64)	*1.82	*1.32	*1.11	*.99	*.51	*.21

Note: All difference means were positive indicating means were high to low from child to cousin.

*$p < .001$

Table 3

Difference Means and Levels of Significance of T-Tests for Help Received According to Kin Group

Kin Group	(Mean)	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Child	(25.11)						
2. Child-in-law	(18.80)	6.24*					
3. Grandchild	(14.90)	10.18*	3.85*				
4. Sibling	(13.36)	10.91*	4.97*	1.48			
5. Sibling-in-law	(12.07)	11.81*	5.79*	2.43	.98*		
6. Niece-Nephew	(12.17)	12.26*	6.64*	2.49*	1.35	-.14	
7. Cousin	(11.90)	12.44*	7.05*	2.44*	2.38*	1.03*	.80*

*$p < .001$

Table 4

Correlates of Help Received According to Level of Kin

	Characteristics							
	Older Adults					Relatives		
Source of Help	Sex	Ed	Age	Health	Number Children	Proximity	Sex	Age
Child	.21***	-.06	.24***	-.24***	.17**	-.24***	.17**	.11*
Child-in-law	.16**	.01	.24***	-.13*	.07	-.34***	-.17**	.13*
Grandchild	.06	-.14*	.10	-.22***	.00	-.28***	-.05	-.07
Sibling	.15*	.04	-.10	-.24***	-.15**	-.28***	-.05	-.07
Sibling-in-law	.18**	-.04	-.03	-.19**	-.14*	-.21**	-.01	-.09
Niece/Nephew	-.01	.08	.16**	-.15*	-.16**	-.26***	.06	.01
Cousin	.08	.06	-.03	-.11	-.06	-.03	.06	-.01

*$p < .05$

**$p < .01$

***$p < .001$